

A Unique Pair of Eclipses:

Fulfilment of a Grand Prophecy

There is not much mystery to the natural phenomenon of eclipses. However, in one particular instance, the scriptures of various religions have associated the occurrence of a unique pair of eclipses with the appearance of a Grand Reformer in the latter days, who was to lay the foundation of unification of mankind and usher in a golden era of universal peace and prosperity.

**The momentous pair of eclipses, proclaiming the
advent of the Grand Reformer, occurred
in 1894 A.D.!**

Written by: Dr. Saleem ur Rahman

The Natural Phenomenon of Eclipses

Lunar and solar eclipses occur according to the laws of nature. When the moon, in the course of its motion around the earth, comes between the sun and the earth in such a way that it prevents sunlight from reaching the earth, we have a *solar eclipse*. And when the earth comes between the sun and the moon in such a way that its shadow falls on the moon, we have a *lunar eclipse*.

There is nothing mysterious about the occurrence of these natural phenomena. However, in one particular instance the scriptures of various religions (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism etc.) have associated the occurrence of lunar and solar eclipses with the appearance of a Grand Reformer in the latter days. Below we present a selection of evidence only from the primary sources of Christianity and Islam.

Eclipses according to the Holy Bible

The Holy Bible (The New King James Version, 1980) gives a clear description of the latter days and, in that context, mentions the occurrence of the solar and lunar eclipses as signs proclaiming the second advent of Jesus Christ. The gospel of St. Mark (13:24), under the title "The Coming of the Son of Man", says :

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the Sun shall be darkened, and the Moon shall not give her light, and the Stars shall be falling from heaven, and

the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."

[See also, Matthew (24:29)]

The words of the Biblical prophecy have, obviously, been used metaphorically as is often the case with revealed words. The meaning conveyed here is that the sun and the moon will be eclipsed in those days.

A noteworthy aspect of this prophecy is that God had not yet revealed to Jesus Christ what the "day and hour" of these signs would be (see Mark 13:32-37). Centuries later, God *did* reveal these specific details to the Holy Prophet of Islam (pbuh), whose prophecy is noted in a later section.

Eclipses according to the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an also mentions the eclipses of the sun and the moon as signs of the latter days. The Holy Qur'an says:

"When the eye is dazzled. And the moon is eclipsed. And the sun and the moon are brought together."
(75:8-10)

The phrase "the sun and the moon are brought together", in the above quote, implies both solar and lunar eclipses. This prophecy of the Holy Qur'an is further elucidated by a reported prophecy of the Holy Prophet of Islam (pbuh) which contains more specific details.

Lunar and Solar Eclipses: A Grand Prophecy by the Holy Prophet of Islam (pbuh)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) prophesied about a Grand Reformer (known as the *Mahdi*) to appear in the latter days who will have a special spiritual affinity with *Eesa, the prophet of Allah* (i.e., Jesus Christ) and was, therefore, described as the Promised Messiah.

In eminent authority on *Hadith* (recorded sayings of the Prophet of Islam) Sunan Ad-Darqutni [1], compiled by a renowned Muslim scholar Hazrat Ali bin Umar al-Baghdadi ad-Darqutni, who lived in the 4th Century *Hijra* (918-995 A.D.) contains the following *Hadith*, reported by Hazrat Imam Baqar Muhammad bin Ali (r.a) which is a prophecy about the *Mahdi* of the latter days:

إِنَّ لِهَدْيِنَا آيَاتٍ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنْهُ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَنْكَسِفُ الْقَمَرُ
لأَوَّلِ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ وَيَنْكَسِفُ الشَّمْسُ فِي النُّصْفِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ
مِنْهُ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ -

For our Mahdi there are two signs which have never appeared before since the creation of the heavens and the earth, namely the moon will be eclipsed on the first night in Ramadhan and the sun will be eclipsed on the middle day of Ramadhan; and these signs have not appeared since God created the heavens and the earth."

A lunar eclipse occurs at full moon and a solar eclipse at new moon [2] as recorded in astronomical almanacs. The

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new moon is not visible to the naked eye. There is a range of three possible dates of a lunar month on any one of which the lunar eclipse may occur. There is a similar three-day range for a solar eclipse. The months of Islamic Calendar are lunar but they begin when the new moon is big enough to be actually sighted. This involves a lapse of almost 24 hours from the new moon of the almanac.

The eclipse of the moon, according to the Islamic (*Hijra*) Calendar, therefore, occurs on either the 13th, 14th or 15th night of a lunar month, and the eclipse of the sun takes place on the 27th, 28th or 29th of the lunar month. The sign mentioned by the Holy Prophet of Islam (pbuh), therefore, was that the moon would be eclipsed on the first of the possible nights (i.e., the 13th night) of the lunar month, and the eclipse of the sun would take place on the middle of the possible days (i.e., the 28th day) of the same lunar month, which will be the month of Ramadhan. It is important to note that, in view of the phrase "For our Mahdi" in the above prophecy, this sign was to appear during the lifetime of a Mahdi-claimant *after* (and *not before*) he had made the claim of being the Mahdi.

Long-Awaited Reformers

Various religions of the world have been expecting the appearance of a revivalist figure in the latter days to usher in a glorious era of universal peace and harmony for mankind. The Jews expected that the *Messiah* would rejuvenate Judaism; the Christians claimed that the Kingdom of God will be brought closer by the second advent of *Jesus Christ*; the Muslims believed that the *Messiah* and *Mahdi* would bring about the renaissance of Islam; the Hindus awaited the coming of God Himself in

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the form of *Krishna*; and the Budhists waited for the reincarnation of *Buddha*.

Accordingly, many Christian scholars predicted the return of Jesus Christ during the 19th century. But Christ did not appear as they expected. It stands to reason that if God had sent all these different reformers simultaneously --- each one of them inviting mankind to God according to his own philosophy --- it would have led to further fragmentation of the human race, instead of its unification. A single, all-bracing, universal reformer was, therefore, the need of the time.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian: The Single Global Reformer (1835-1908 A.D.)

Towards the end of 1890 A.D., Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, (Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at) claimed that God appointed him the Mahdi and the Promised Messiah: a role of complete subordination to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He explained that the *second advent* of Jesus Christ, as mentioned in previous scriptures, was not to be taken literally, and that it was fulfilled in his own person. **He also claimed to be the embodiment of all the reformers long-awaited by various religions.** He presented many divine signs that appeared in support of his claim. Among these, the *solar and lunar eclipses*, both occurring in the month of Ramadhan, 1894 A.D., based on the afore-mentioned grand prophecy of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh), thirteen centuries ago, hold a special significance. In his own words [3]:

"And I also swear by Almighty God that I am the Promised Messiah and I am the same person who was promised by the prophets. there is news about me and my age in the Torah and the Gospel and the Holy Qur'an. It is stated that there will be eclipses on the sky and severe plague on the earth."

(Translated from Urdu)

Fulfilment of the Grand Prophecy

In exact accord with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), an eclipse of the moon occurred on 13th of Ramadhan, 1311 Hijra (Islamic calender), which was March 21, 1894 A.D., and the eclipse of the sun occurred on the 28th of the same month of Ramadhan, *i.e.*, April 6, 1894. This phenomenon was visible in the eastern hemisphere of the earth. The same phenomenon was repeated in the western hemisphere in the following year when, on March 11, and 26, 1895 A.D., lunar and solar eclipses, respectively, occurred again at the same appointed dates of the month of Ramadhan.

The sighting of the these eclipses was reported in the contemporary Indian press, *e.g.*, *Azad*, the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, the *Pioneer* of Allahabad *etc.* The details of these eclipses can readily be confirmed from Oppolzer's [4] *Cannon of Eclipses* (New York, 1962) and *Nautical Almanac*, (London, 1894). The dates of these eclipses, reported in the above-named sources are, of course, in terms of Christian era. The calculations [5] based on the position of the moon, prove that the lunar dates of these eclipses do indeed correspond to the 13th and 28th of the Islamic month of Ramadhan.

Unique Features of Fulfilment of the Prophecy

Lunar and solar eclipses occur according to the laws of nature. But it is important to note that the occurrence of both the eclipses on the specified dates of Ramadhan, to be visible from a given place, is an extremely rare event. This has been studied by an astronomer, Dr. Saleh M. Alladin and his colleagues in the Department of Astronomy, Osmania University of Hyderabad, India. He concluded that, in the two centuries (1800-2000 A.D), both lunar and solar eclipses had occurred 17 times in Ramadhan, but the year 1894 was the only year in which both the eclipses were *visible from Qadian* on the dates specified in the prophecy.

The prophecy does not mean that the mere occurrence of lunar and solar eclipses, in itself, is an unprecedented or unique phenomenon. The uniqueness in the fulfillment of this prophecy, however, is that *never before* did both the eclipses occur in the same month of Ramadhan, on the dates specified in the prophecy, when a Mahdi claimant already existed who invoked these signs in his support. Thus several distinctive features of this grand prophecy stand out. It has never been in the history of mankind that *all* of the following conditions of this prophecy were simultaneously fulfilled.

1. The two eclipses occurred as described in the prophecy, when a person who had *already* claimed to be Mahdi existed, and when these signs appeared, he *invoked* these heavenly signs in his support.
2. Both the eclipses were specific to the same *month* of Ramadhan of the same year.

3. Both eclipses occurred on the precise *dates* of the said month, as specified in the prophecy.
4. The entire prophecy was fulfilled *twice*, i.e., once for the eastern hemisphere, in 1894 A.D., and the next year for the western hemisphere.
5. It is fascinating to note that when these eclipses were repeated for the western hemisphere, the next year, (the lunar eclipse on March 11 and the solar eclipse on March 26, 1895), though these were *not* visible from Qadian, the dates in Qadian were *still* the same i.e., the 13th and 28th of Ramadhan!
6. The months of the Islamic Calendar begin with the actual sighting of the new moon, which may vary from place to place. A standard location is, therefore, necessary for ascertaining the dates involved in the prophecy. It is most remarkable that Qadian proved to be that *unique standard*, for *both* hemispheres of the earth. This was so because Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed to be the Mahdi, and for whose benefit the prophecy was intended, lived in Qadian.
7. This prophecy was fulfilled not only with respect to the *dates* but also the *time* on which these eclipses occurred. Because the lunar eclipse occurred not just on the *first* of the possible nights but also quite early in the *first part* of that night (between 7 : 00 p.m. and 9 : 30 p.m., Calcutta Standard Time) and the solar eclipse occurred not only on the *middle* day of the three.

possible days but also near the *mid part* of the day (between 9 : 00 a.m. and 11 : 00 a.m., Calcutta Standard Time).

8. To add to the already noted unusual features of these eclipses, a further element of rarity was provided, in the context of the solar eclipse, by the fact that it belonged to the most uncommonly observed type of solar eclipses viz. the Annular-Total type [6].

Although the prophecy of these eclipses was fulfilled with remarkable accuracy, certain opposing voices were also heard which claimed that the intent of the prophecy was that the lunar eclipse would occur on the first night of the lunar month of Ramadhan. A careful reading of the prophecy, however, will reveal that the Arabic word *Hilal* (which means the moon of the first night of a lunar month) has not been used. Instead, the word *Qamar* has been used which refers to the moon of later nights.

The Falling Stars: The Biblical Prophecy Revisited

It will be recalled that the Biblical prophecy noted earlier (Mark 13: 24), mentioned that "the stars shall be falling from heaven", in addition to the implied reference to the lunar and solar eclipses. It is interesting to note that an unusual spectacle of meteoric showers blazed the sky on the night between November 27 and 28, 1885 A.D., which is recorded by *Harmsworth Universal Encyclopaedia* (see under Andromedids): "There were notable showers in 1872, 1885 and 1892." That of 1885 was personally witnessed

by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian who described [7] this experience as follows:

"I kept on watching these meteoric showers with great delight because it was revealed to me that this sign was in support of me; for it had been designated, in earlier revealed scriptures, to be a great sign of the advent of Messiah."

Conclusion

God Almighty has always manifested the truth of His prophets by the appearance of various signs which are beyond human contrivance. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (a.s) claimed to be the Mahdi and the Promised Messiah whose advent was awaited at the beginning of the 14th century of the Islamic Calendar. He was supported by numerous divine signs. Among these, the occurrence of solar and lunar eclipses, as foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam (pubh), occupies a unique position in that *never before* did both the eclipses occur in the same month of Ramadhan, on the dates specified in the prophecy, when a Mahdi claimant invoked these signs in his support.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1908 A.D.), *the Promised Messiah* (a.s), founded the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in 1889 under divine direction. At that time, he was all alone lacking all worldly resources. Only a few responded to his call with complete faith and devotion. His opponents, who were strong and powerful, raised an unprecedented storm of hostility. In this moment of trial, God Almighty stood by him with the divine assurance: *I shall cause thy message to reach the corners of the earth.* Today, it is an organized and dynamic community of over

10 million Ahmadi Muslims living in more than 135 countries of the world, who are now led by his 4th successor, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (a.t.b.a) The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at is actively engaged in the peaceful propagation of the true message of Islam which is destined to solve the contemporary problems of mankind.[8]

Bibliography

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